



HOME IN TIMIȘOARA:

A PLAN FOR BELONGING

TIMISOARA

INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN



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“In the cherry blossom’s shade
there’s no such thing as a
stranger”



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OUR MAYOR **DOMINIC FRITZ**

Timișoara is a city shaped by generations of people who came from different places, speaking different languages, carrying different traditions and beliefs. This diversity is what has formed our character: open, European, and deeply oriented toward dialogue. Today, in a context where human mobility and demographic change define urban life globally, we choose to see this reality not as a challenge, but as an opportunity to become a stronger and more united city.

By joining the WELDI network, Timișoara takes a natural step toward an administration that treats inclusion and diversity as foundational to local development. Cities are the first places where people seek safety, support, and the chance for a new beginning — and we have the responsibility to create an ecosystem in which every person, regardless of origin, can live with dignity, find their place, and contribute to our community.

The strategy we are strengthening through this project reflects a principle I deeply believe in: a city becomes better for everyone when it becomes better for its most vulnerable residents. This is why we focus on access to services, education, housing, cultural integration, and civic participation — not only as public policies, but as an expression of respect for every person who chooses to call Timișoara home.

We bring into this effort the experience gained as a recent European Capital of Culture, a moment that reminded us that Timișoara's true strength lies in its ability to connect people, build bridges, and give meaning to diverse communities. The WELDI project allows us to carry this spirit forward and to learn, in turn, from other European cities that place people at the center of public policy.

I believe in a Timișoara where no one is invisible, a Timișoara where every story is heard, and every person finds their place. This brochure is not just a technical document; it is an invitation to continue building, together, a city where diversity becomes an essential part of our shared identity.

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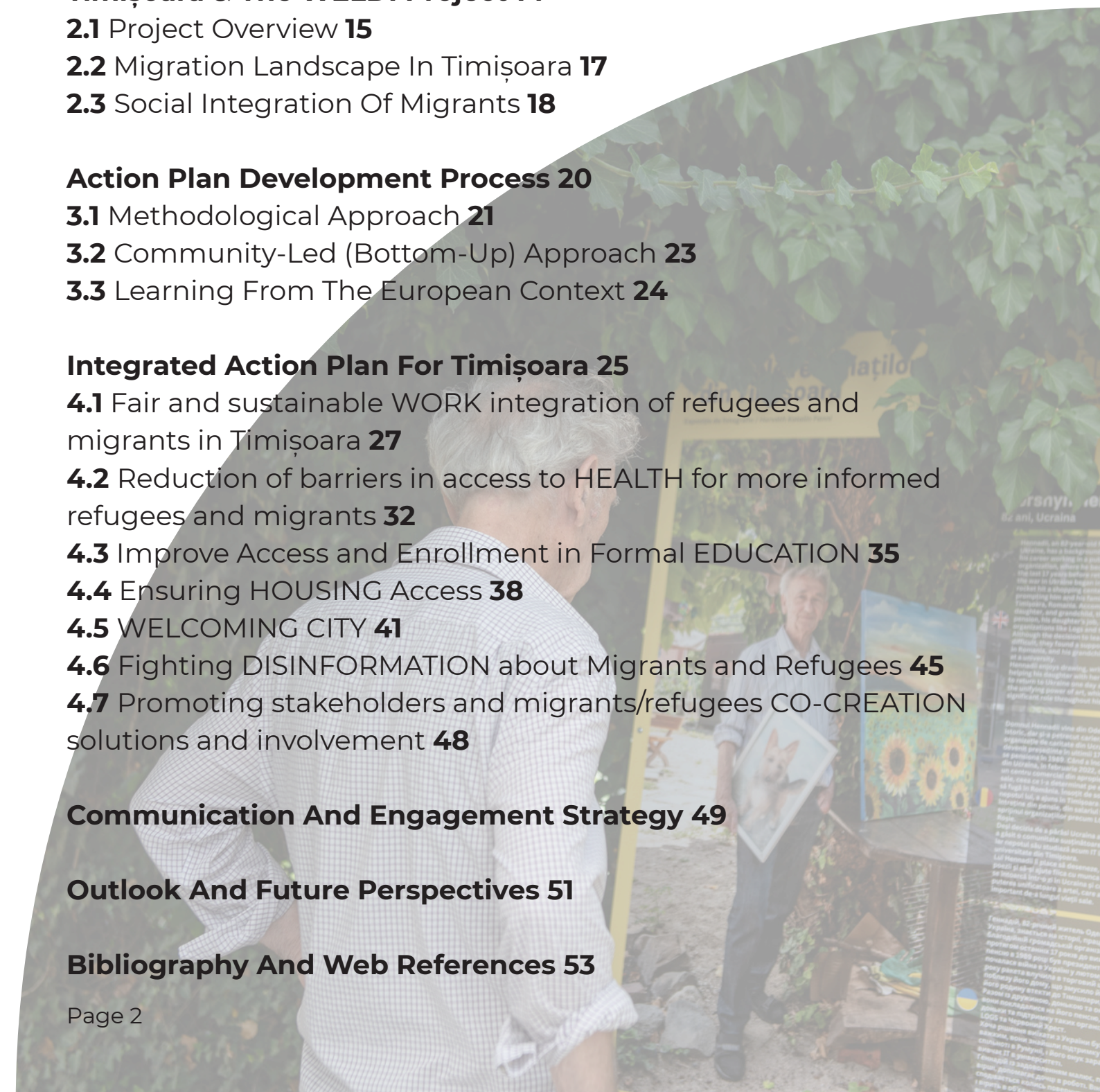
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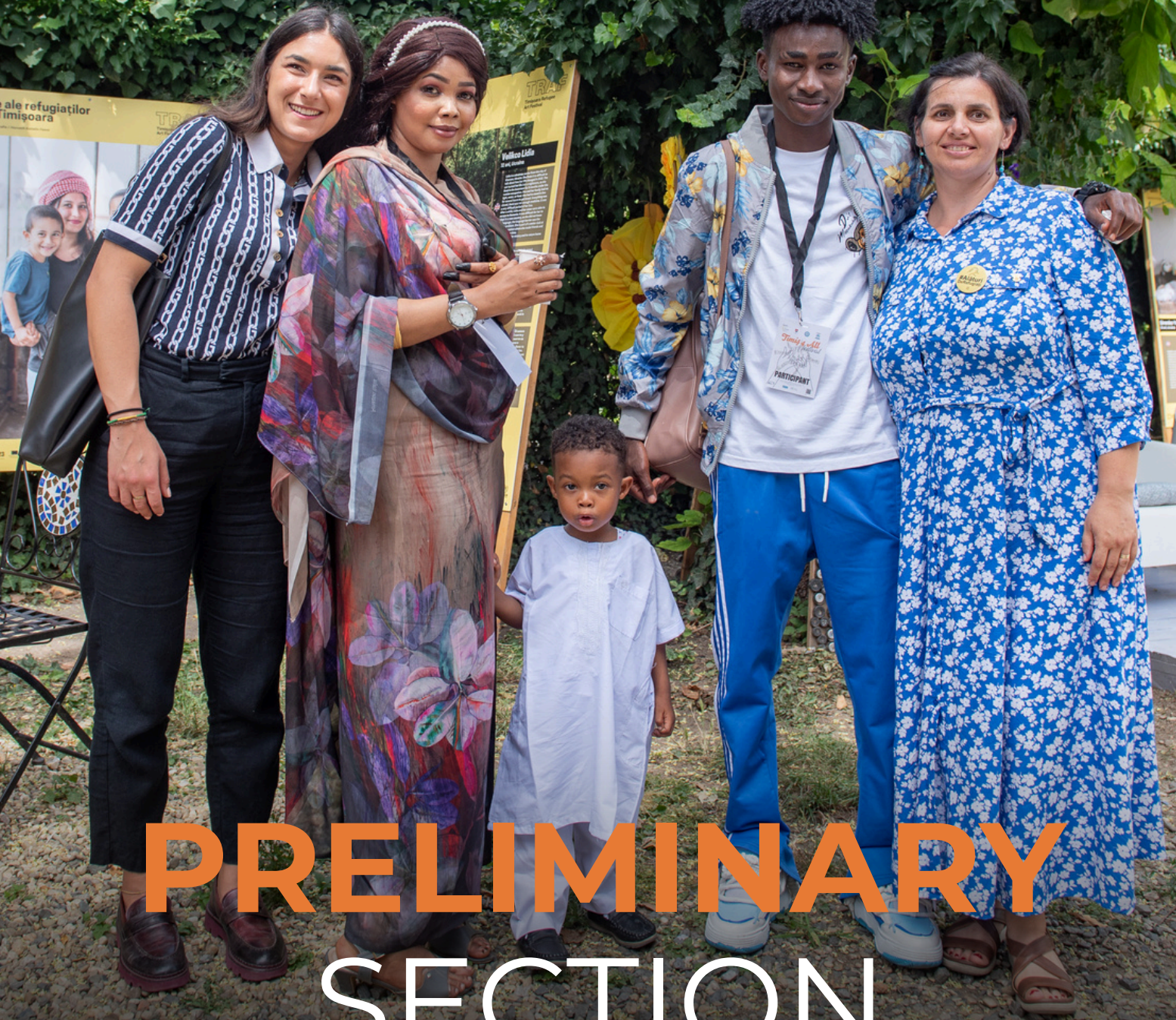
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PRELIMINARY SECTION



The Integrated Action Plan

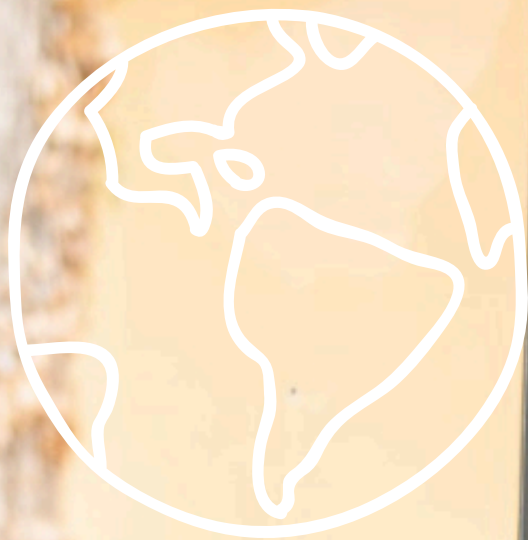
represents a strategic, community-rooted vision designed to address the needs of a rapidly changing demographic landscape. As a European city with a long tradition of openness and multicultural exchange, Timisoara positions itself as a “welcoming city” — a place where newcomers can find support, opportunities, and the foundation to build a dignified and meaningful future.

This strategy builds on existing local initiatives in the fields of migration, inclusion, and social cohesion, strengthening support networks that ensure access to housing, education, healthcare, and cultural integration. At its core lies the ambition to reduce obstacles faced by newcomers — from language and administrative challenges to cultural differences — and to cultivate an urban ecosystem where diversity is recognised as a driver of innovation and development.

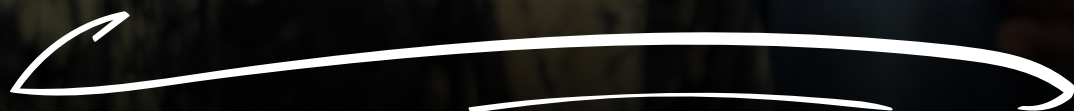
Timisoara’s involvement in the WELDI network under the URBACT programme further reinforces this mission, connecting the city to a wider European community committed to sustainable, human-centred local practices for migrant integration. Through shared learning, collaborative projects, and transnational exchanges, Timisoara refines its approach and contributes to shaping a European model of inclusive urban development.

The Action Plan also places strong emphasis on strengthening relationships between newcomers and long-term residents, through socio-cultural initiatives, workshops, mentorship programmes, community events, and digital platforms that foster dialogue and civic participation. Its long-term ambition is to build a city where diversity is not only accepted but celebrated — a vibrant, open, and inclusive Timisoara where every individual, regardless of origin, can find their place and contribute to the city’s shared future.





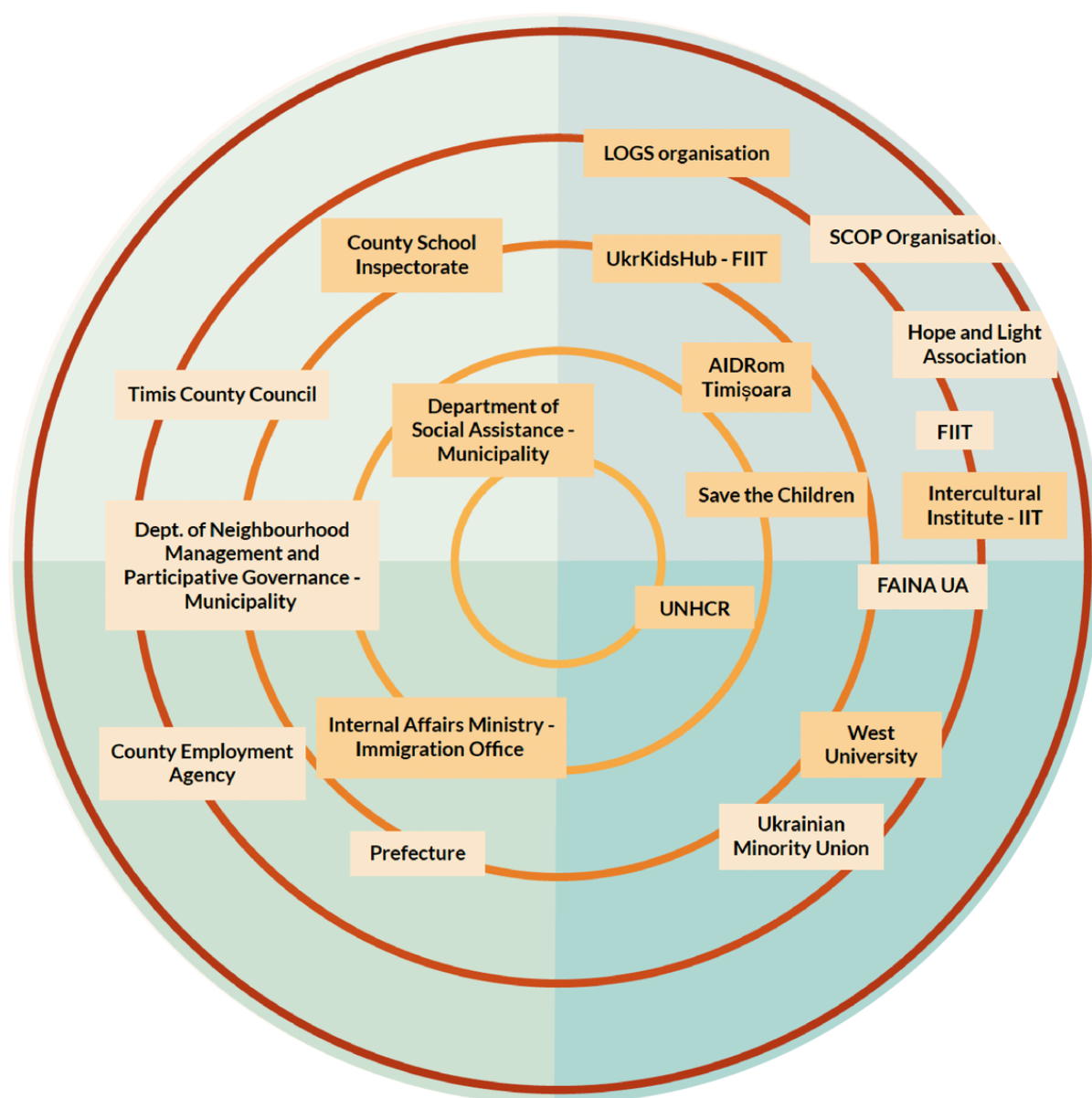
BACKGROUND AND **POLICY CONTEXT**



URBACT LOCAL GROUP

► Local government

► Civil Society



► Other Government

► Other

1.1 TIMIȘOARA PROFILE

Timișoara, one of Romania's most dynamic urban centers and historically a gateway between Central and South-Eastern Europe, has a population of approximately 319,000 inhabitants. Known for its multicultural heritage and strong civic culture, the city has long attracted people from diverse backgrounds — from students and skilled professionals to refugees and economic migrants seeking stability and opportunity.

In recent years, several waves of mobility have reshaped the city's demographic landscape: the arrival of migrants without papers during the pandemic, the influx of refugees from Ukraine, and the presence of economic migrants from Asia. These developments strengthened local cooperation between public institutions, civil society, and migrant communities, paving the way for a more coordinated and inclusive approach to newcomer reception.

Timișoara's identity has always been rooted in openness, pluralism, and intercultural dialogue. As the 2023 European Capital of Culture, the city reaffirmed its capacity to connect people, celebrate diversity, and position inclusion as a defining value of its urban vision.

Socio-economic background

Timișoara is today one of the strongest economic hubs in Western Romania, supported by a diverse mix of industries: automotive, IT&C, manufacturing, logistics, creative industries, and higher education. With an unemployment rate below 1% (August 2023), local businesses consistently face labour shortages, which increases the demand for foreign workers and newcomers seeking employment.

The city's strategic position, strong universities, and active business ecosystem attract both local and international talent. Small and medium enterprises, alongside multinational companies, continue to expand their operations in the region, stimulating job creation but also generating new needs in terms of housing, mobility, education, and social services.

Timișoara's socio-economic profile demonstrates a high potential for sustainable development, but also highlights the necessity of coordinated policies to support both vulnerable residents and newly arrived populations.

A Model of Sustainable and Inclusive Growth

Building on its multicultural legacy and recent experience as European Capital of Culture, Timișoara is positioned to become a regional model for inclusive urban development. The city is committed to transforming its whole-of-society cooperation into a permanent system: improving service coordination, building trust with migrant communities, and enabling newcomers to participate fully in the social, cultural, and economic life of the city.

The WELDI Integrated Action Plan strengthens this vision by:

- mapping migrant needs and existing services
- developing multilingual access to information
- improving inter-institutional cooperation
- supporting employment, training, and entrepreneurship
- fostering interaction between newcomers and long-term residents
- encouraging initiatives that empower vulnerable groups

Timișoara aims to remain a city where diversity becomes a resource, inclusion becomes public policy, and every person — regardless of origin — can find both opportunity and belonging.

1.3 POLICY AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Local strategies

The Intercultural Strategy of Timiș County aims to strengthen cooperation and coordination between public institutions and civil society in order to create a coherent and effective framework for promoting intercultural principles, equal access, participation, and social cohesion in a diverse local community.

Since 2022 the city has a service for supporting Ukrainian refugees living in Timișoara to find accommodation, to access health and education services, facilitate work integration and referrals to other programmes/activities (Romanian lessons, integration activities for children and adults, financial support) developed by local NGOs.

The county's Local Support Team for foreign citizens' integration promotes access to rights and services for migrants holding a residence permit, including beneficiaries of international protection.

One of the city's Social Services Strategy's objectives is to adapt services to the increased number of migrants in Timișoara.

DISTRIBUTION OF COMPETENCIES AND FUNDING

Under the 44/2004 Ordinance on social integration the national government's General Inspectorate for Immigration (IGI) is responsible for integration in cooperation with local authorities and associations. In reality, however, cities are not actively involved or supported in this role.

The state's financial support for Ukrainian refugee reception changed in April 2023.

The so-called 50/20 programme covering accommodation and food now covers only accommodation and is conditioned on beneficiaries being employed or registered unemployed and having children enrolled in Romanian schools. This change was decided without the involvement of cities. A working group on this theme includes NGOs, but not cities. The Ukrainian reception policy is coordinated by the national government department responsible for emergencies, which creates a bias and hampers consolidating integration policies.

The Romanian Partnership Agreement with the EU for 2021-2027 states that necessary funding for complementary actions regarding migrant integrations will be provided through AMIF, ESF+ and ERDF. Nonetheless, according to the National Funding Guidelines, currently in public consultation, it is proposed that local authorities in Romania will not be eligible for funding through AMIF.”, de schimbat ultima frază: According to approved National Funding General Guidelines local authorities can be eligible for funding through AMIF, but Municipalities were not eligible in none of the Specific Funding Guidelines.

Capacities at the IGI in issuing residence permits do not correspond to the current demand and create bottlenecks for migrants in accessing their rights.

1.4 SWOT ANALYSIS

SWOT



STRENGTHS

The two emergencies of the pandemic (when migrants without residence permits arrived from Serbia and needed to be quarantined and supported) and of the arrival of refugees from Ukraine triggered new collaboration between NGOs and the city authorities and allowed to build trust between both sides.

Active Ukrainian community that has initiated projects and provided communication structures to involve community members and foster intercultural interaction.

Prior experience in stakeholder coordination through EU projects in URBACT network ROOF on ending homelessness.



WEAKNESSES

Lack of expertise in designing reception/integration policies.

Lack of coordination between stakeholders - no joint approach and no coordination in the development of services.



OPPORTUNITIES

Organising the reception of Ukrainian refugees has led to the creation of new services and laid a basis for an intensified cooperation in the future.



THREATS

National government is not listening to or involving cities.

There is competition between NGOs.

There is a hostile climate for non-European migrants.



TIMIȘOARA & THE WELDI PROJECT

2.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW

WELDI – Welcome and Empowerment for Local Dignified Integration is an URBACT IV Action Planning Network that supports cities across Europe in improving policy responses for the dignified reception and integration of third-country nationals (TCNs). As demographic change, labour market transformation and increased mobility redefine local realities, municipalities face the challenge of designing coherent, rights-based strategies that strengthen social cohesion and ensure equal access to services for newcomers.

As one of the ten partner cities, Timișoara contributes to the network with its recent experience in managing complex migration dynamics, including the coordinated response to refugees arriving from Ukraine, the presence of economic migrants employed in key local industries, and a growing number of asylum seekers residing in the county. While these groups differ in legal status and needs, they share common barriers linked to access to employment, housing, education, healthcare, and reliable information.

WELDI provides a structured platform for partner cities to exchange practices, analyse systemic gaps and jointly develop integrated local strategies. Through transnational study visits, thematic workshops, peer-to-peer exchanges and action-planning methodologies, the network promotes multilevel governance, involving municipalities, civil society, public institutions, local employers, and migrant-led groups.

For Timișoara, participation in WELDI is an opportunity to move from emergency-driven reactions to a coherent and sustainable integration system. The city's Local Action Plan aims to translate lessons learned across the network into actionable and locally adapted measures that strengthen protection mechanisms, enhance service coordination and foster equal participation of migrants in the economic, cultural and social life of the community.





TIMIȘOARA (RO)



Population

319,000 inhabitants



Metropolitan area

~500,000 inhabitants

Local coordinator: Head of Resilience and Community Mobilisation Service – Municipality of Timișoara

Migration Profile

- 1,300 refugees from Ukraine under temporary protection
- 428 children
- 557 women
- 1,500 economic migrants (mainly from Nepal and Sri Lanka)
- 6,500 asylum applications registered in Timiș county (managed by IGI with local branch office)
- Undocumented migrants: number unknown

Socio-Economic Context

- Unemployment rate below 1% (Aug. 2023)
- Local employers face significant labour shortages
- Strong demand for workers in manufacturing, construction, logistics, HoReCa and care sectors

Key Integration Challenges

- Fragmented coordination across institutions
- Limited access to affordable housing
- Insufficient information and legal support for newcomers
- Need for structured language learning pathways
- Vulnerability of migrants with complex social issues

2.2 MIGRATION LANDSCAPE IN TIMIȘOARA

In recent years, Timișoara has undergone significant demographic and social changes, shaped by the increasing arrival of migrants with diverse backgrounds, skills, and legal statuses. While migrants still represent a relatively small proportion of the city's total population, their presence has become increasingly visible within the local economy, education system, and social fabric.

The current migration landscape reflects both structural needs and humanitarian responsibilities. On one side, economic sectors such as manufacturing, construction, logistics, HoReCa, and care services rely on a growing number of labour migrants, particularly from Nepal and Sri Lanka, who respond to acute labour shortages and skills gaps. On the other side, the city continues to host refugees and beneficiaries of temporary protection from Ukraine, supported through community networks and municipal services. Additionally, Timiș County registers more than half of Romania's annual asylum applications, handled by the General Inspectorate for Immigration (IGI), which operates a local branch in Timișoara.

The motivations behind migration to Timișoara are equally varied—ranging from access to employment opportunities, higher wages, and educational pathways, to safety, family reunification, or improved living standards. Migrants contribute to local development through their work in key industries, entrepreneurial initiatives, and engagement with local services and civil society.

Despite these contributions, challenges remain, particularly in relation to housing availability, language learning, access to services, and administrative procedures. Some newcomers experience integration barriers linked to limited information, insufficient legal guidance, and lack of familiarity with Romanian public systems. Vulnerable groups—including single mothers, people with disabilities, or individuals facing mental health challenges—require tailored and sustained support.

Migration flows into Timișoara increasingly extend beyond the city itself and interact with surrounding rural and peri-urban areas, shaping new forms of settlement and community life across the metropolitan region. These evolving demographic patterns highlight the need for coordinated, multi-stakeholder responses that align local realities with national and European integration frameworks.

Overall, Timișoara's migration dynamics call for a shift from fragmented, emergency-based measures to a comprehensive, long-term strategic approach, positioning migration not only as a challenge but also as an opportunity for a more resilient, diverse, and future-ready city.

2.3 SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS

In Timișoara, social integration is understood as a continuous, multi-dimensional process grounded in access to rights, participation in community life, and collaborative engagement between newcomers and local residents. Rather than viewing integration as a final objective, the city approaches it as an evolving pathway in which both migrants and host communities contribute to a shared sense of belonging.

Core Services and Institutional Infrastructure

Timișoara has progressively developed a network of services dedicated to supporting migrants' inclusion. The municipality's Social Assistance Department, together with its Resilience and Community Mobilisation Service, plays a central coordination role—facilitating collaboration between public authorities, NGOs, schools, community groups, and employers.

Municipal and county-level structures provide support for:

- access to healthcare, in cooperation with hospitals, family doctors and the Health Insurance House
- social services and child protection, through DGASPC Timiș
- education integration, via the County School Inspectorate and schools offering Romanian language support, enrolment assistance, and psychological counselling
- legal and administrative procedures, including guidance related to residency, asylum, and social rights
- employment support, in collaboration with the County Employment Agency (AJOFM) and civil society
- housing mediation, through municipal social services and NGO-led programmes

The arrival of people without residence permits during the pandemic, and later the influx of refugees from Ukraine, strengthened cooperation between institutions and civil society. These emergencies accelerated the development of coordinated support channels, improved information flows, and fostered greater trust between migrants and local stakeholders.

Cultural Inclusion and Community Engagement

Local NGOs, faith-based initiatives, and community organisations play a key role in promoting intercultural dialogue and social interaction. Regular events, social gatherings, volunteering activities, and workshops create opportunities for migrants and long-term residents to build relationships, exchange experiences, and participate in community life.

At the same time, Ukrainian-led initiatives—such as community centres, education hubs, and cultural activities—have expanded the city's integration ecosystem. The UkrKids Hub at the Timișoara House of Youth stands out as a good practice example, offering face-to-face teaching for Ukrainian children, creative workshops, and peer learning spaces that benefit both Ukrainian and Romanian communities.

Education, Youth, and Skills Development

Schools play a central role in integration, particularly for migrants and refugee children. With support from the Inspectorate and NGOs, schools in Timișoara provide:

- Romanian language learning
- translation and interpretation support
- psychological counselling
- integration activities for parents
- peer learning and youth-led initiatives

These efforts facilitate smoother transitions into the education system and contribute to long-term inclusion.

Social Cohesion and Intercultural Mediation

Intercultural mediation is increasingly used to support communication between migrants and public services - especially in hospitals, schools, and social services. Mediators, interpreters, and community leaders help newcomers navigate complex procedures, access essential services, and build trust with institutions.

Civil society also contributes to combating discrimination and promoting balanced narratives about migration through public campaigns, community events, and awareness programmes.

Ongoing Challenges

Despite progress, several barriers persist:

- limited affordable housing, especially for large families and low-income workers
- language barriers, particularly for migrants working long hours
- fragmented service coordination, requiring stronger cooperation among stakeholders
- limited childcare availability, affecting migrant women's access to employment
- gaps in legal information, especially for newcomers without documents
- complex needs among certain groups, including survivors of violence or individuals with mental health difficulties

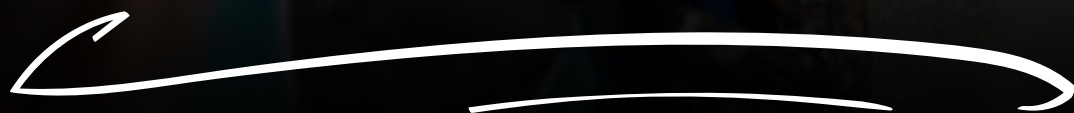
These challenges underline the need for more systematic approaches and long-term planning.

Scaling Through WELDI

Timișoara's participation in the WELDI network enables the city to consolidate its integration efforts, learn from good practices across Europe, and co-create solutions with migrants themselves. Through a rights-based, multi-stakeholder approach, Timișoara seeks to strengthen local coordination, improve access to services, and foster a more inclusive and cohesive urban environment for all residents.



ACTION PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS



3.1 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The development of Timișoara's Integrated Action Plan (IAP) under the WELDI network has been guided by URBACT principles, grounded in co-production, participatory governance, and evidence-based policymaking. Building on the city's long-standing tradition of civic engagement and collaboration with civil society, the methodology ensured that the resulting plan reflects both institutional priorities and the lived realities of migrants and local communities.

The process was iterative, evolving through consultations with municipal departments, public service providers, NGOs, employers, schools, and migrant representatives. The existing institutional framework—particularly the Social Assistance Department and its Resilience and Community Mobilisation Service—provided a strong foundation for coordinating this work, supplemented by contributions from the County School Inspectorate, the Health Insurance House, universities, youth organisations, and Ukrainian community groups.

The methodology followed five structured steps:

1. URBACT Local Group (ULG) Establishment

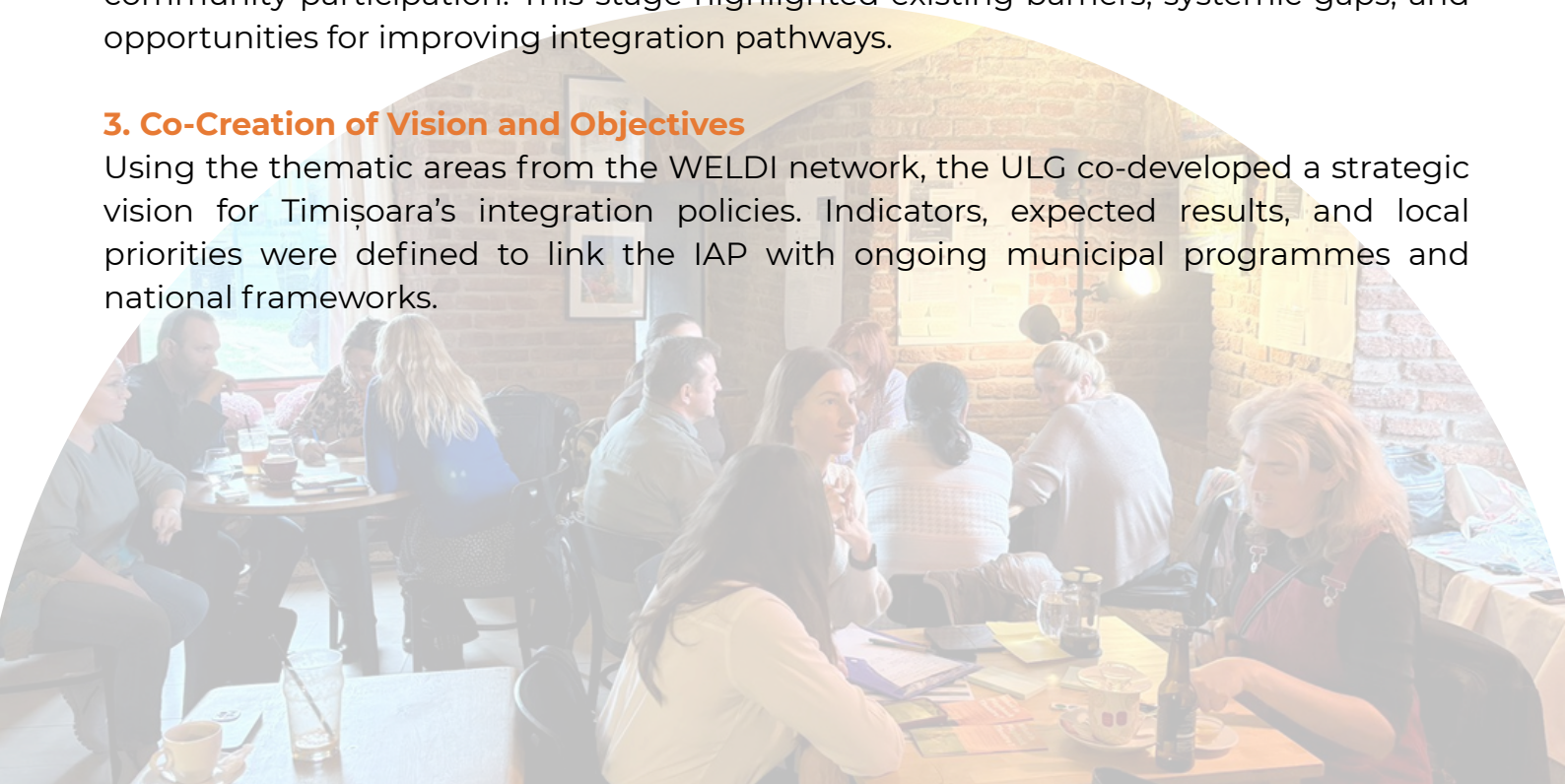
A diverse ULG was formed to represent key stakeholders, including migrants, civil society organisations, public institutions, educational actors, healthcare providers, and employers. The ULG played a central role in driving the IAP process, ensuring inclusiveness and shared ownership.

2. Diagnosis and Problem Definition

Through workshops, focus groups, surveys, and field visits, the ULG agreed on priority themes related to work, health, education, housing, welcoming services, and community participation. This stage highlighted existing barriers, systemic gaps, and opportunities for improving integration pathways.

3. Co-Creation of Vision and Objectives

Using the thematic areas from the WELDI network, the ULG co-developed a strategic vision for Timișoara's integration policies. Indicators, expected results, and local priorities were defined to link the IAP with ongoing municipal programmes and national frameworks.



4. Action Development

Working groups translated priorities into concrete actions, defining timelines, responsible institutions, resources, and expected outputs. This stage ensured alignment with existing services while introducing new mechanisms for coordination and support.

5. Communication and Validation

Draft actions were presented to municipal leadership, service providers, NGOs, and migrant communities for validation. Feedback from these consultations strengthened the final version of the IAP and reinforced the city's commitment to participatory governance.

Overall, the methodology behind Timișoara's IAP demonstrates the value of collaborative, locally adapted solutions. It reflects a shared commitment to building a city where newcomers and long-term residents contribute equally to inclusion, resilience, and community well-being.



3.2 COMMUNITY-LED (BOTTOM-UP) APPROACH

The URBACT Local Group (ULG) in Timișoara has been central to the development of the Integrated Action Plan, ensuring a participatory, bottom-up process aligned with URBACT standards. The group brought together diverse representatives from public institutions, NGOs, migrant communities, employers, education and healthcare providers, and youth organisations—reflecting the complexity and multi-sectoral nature of integration in the city.

Between January 2024 and November 2025, the ULG held a series of structured meetings and thematic workshops focused on employment, housing, healthcare, education, community participation, and anti-discrimination. Migrants and refugees participated actively in these discussions, sharing experiences that shaped the design of interventions and highlighted community priorities.

The ULG contributed directly to the formulation of strategic actions, alignment of services, and identification of gaps. Its collaborative environment fostered trust-building and strengthened the link between municipal institutions and community actors. Importantly, the participation of Ukrainian-led organisations played a crucial role in bringing forward the perspectives of newcomers.

Beyond the plan itself, the ULG helped establish a culture of shared responsibility and participatory governance. The municipality aims to maintain this structure beyond the WELDI project, integrating the ULG into future processes related to inclusion and urban policy development.

3.3 LEARNING FROM THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT

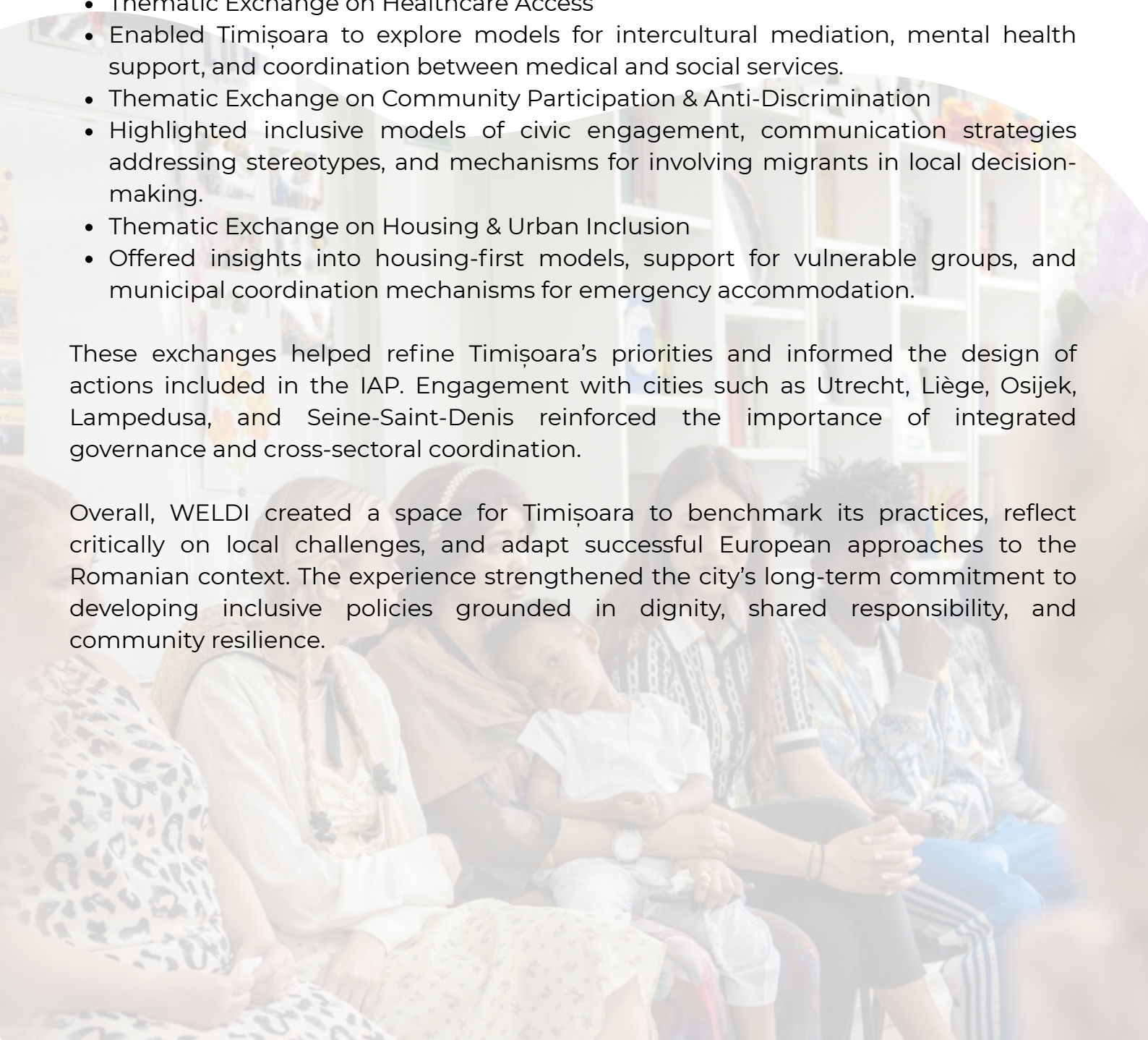
Timișoara's participation in the WELDI network significantly strengthened the city's approach to migrant inclusion by embedding local efforts within a broader European framework. Through thematic exchanges, shared methodologies, and peer learning, the city gained insight into tested models of reception, coordination, and long-term integration adopted across Europe.

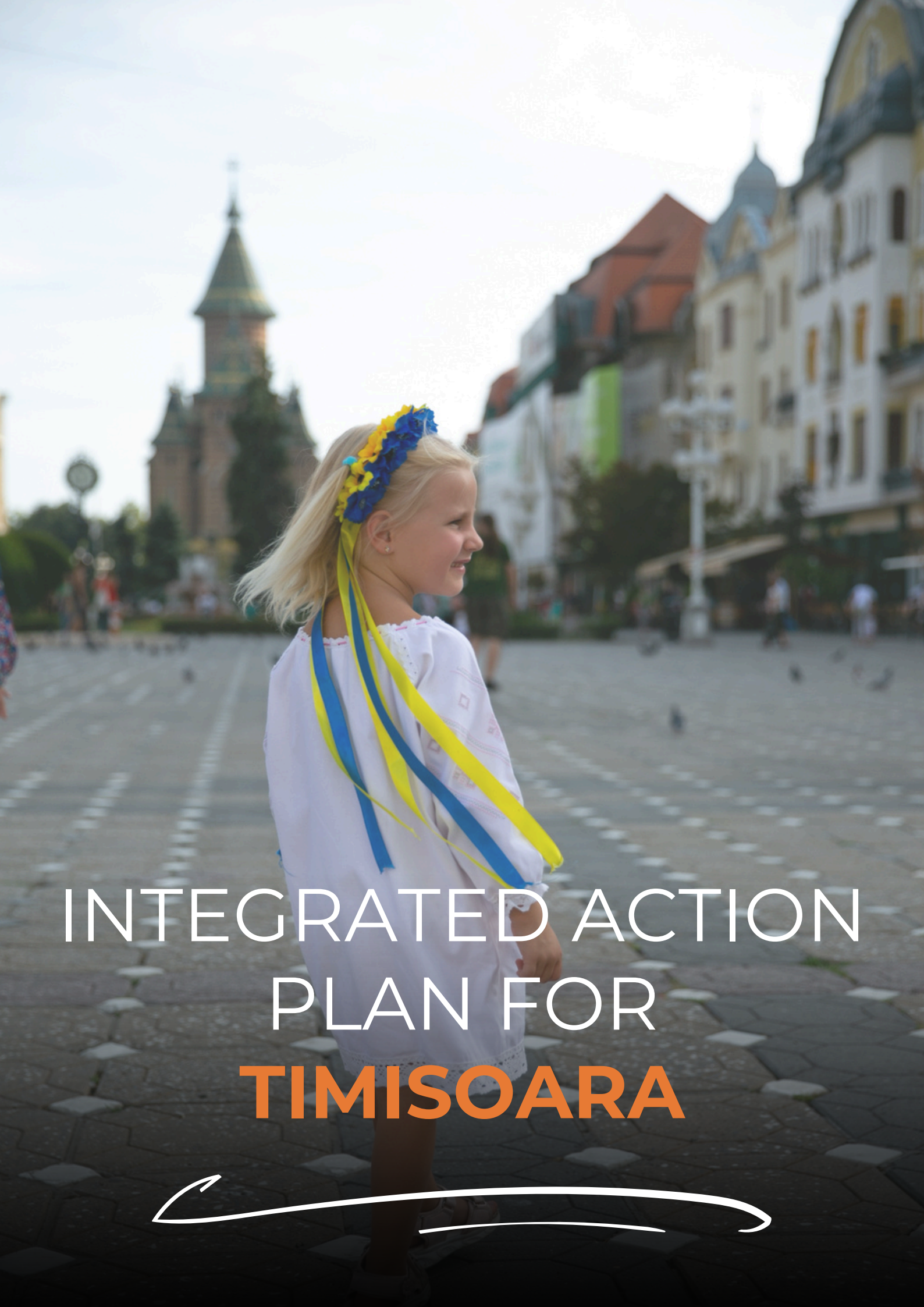
Participation in thematic exchanges offered valuable learning opportunities:

- Thematic Exchange on Decent Work & Labour Rights
- Provided tools for improving employment conditions for migrant workers and enhancing cooperation between labour inspectors, municipalities, and NGOs.
- Thematic Exchange on Healthcare Access
- Enabled Timișoara to explore models for intercultural mediation, mental health support, and coordination between medical and social services.
- Thematic Exchange on Community Participation & Anti-Discrimination
- Highlighted inclusive models of civic engagement, communication strategies addressing stereotypes, and mechanisms for involving migrants in local decision-making.
- Thematic Exchange on Housing & Urban Inclusion
- Offered insights into housing-first models, support for vulnerable groups, and municipal coordination mechanisms for emergency accommodation.

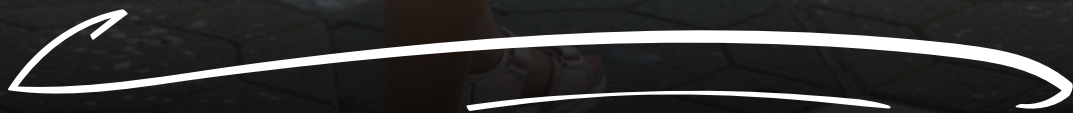
These exchanges helped refine Timișoara's priorities and informed the design of actions included in the IAP. Engagement with cities such as Utrecht, Liège, Osijek, Lampedusa, and Seine-Saint-Denis reinforced the importance of integrated governance and cross-sectoral coordination.

Overall, WELDI created a space for Timișoara to benchmark its practices, reflect critically on local challenges, and adapt successful European approaches to the Romanian context. The experience strengthened the city's long-term commitment to developing inclusive policies grounded in dignity, shared responsibility, and community resilience.





INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN FOR **TIMISOARA**



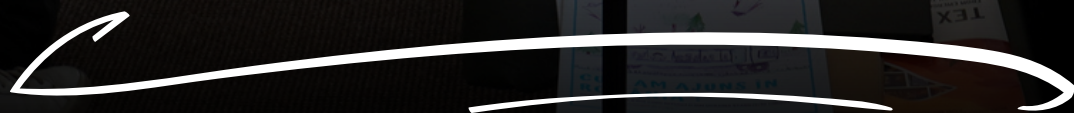
4. INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN FOR TIMIȘOARA - AT A GLANCE

The collaborative process of the Working Group has resulted in a comprehensive Integrated Action Plan structured around seven focus areas. Each area addresses a key dimension of inclusion and is supported by specific objectives and actionable measures designed to strengthen Timișoara's capacity to support refugees and migrants. Together, focus areas form a coherent framework that guides coordinated efforts across institutions, civil society, and community actors to ensure fair access to services, meaningful participation, and long-term integration.





FAIR AND SUSTAINABLE **WORK** INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN TIMISOARA



General objective:

By 2028, promote fair and sustainable work integration for at least **300 refugees and migrants in Timișoara** by:

- ✓ Improving access to clear employment information and legal rights
- ✓ Supporting Romanian language learning and diploma recognition
- ✓ Enhancing protection against discrimination and exploitation

Specific objectives (5):

The proposed specific objectives and actions respond directly to the ULG members' feedback and ensure that the program addresses not just job access, but also dignity, legal protection, and equal opportunity.

1. ENSURE FAIR AND INFORMED RECRUITMENT & CONTRACTS

Actions:

1.1 Organize quarterly info sessions or legal clinics in collaboration with labor inspectors, civil society and employment agency:

- a. Rights and responsibilities in Romanian labor law
- b. What to expect during recruitment and trial periods
- c. How to identify and report unfair contracts or abuse

1.2 Distribute multilingual legal information packs on contracts, labor rights, and where to seek help

1.3 Set up a simple online and paper-based reporting mechanism for cases of workplace abuse or rights violations, coordinated with labor protection institutions

2. ACCELERATE ROMANIAN LANGUAGE LEARNING FOR EMPLOYMENT

Actions:

- 2.1 Provide fast-track Romanian courses (sector-specific, when possible, e.g., construction, care work, hospitality), with flexible timing for working adults
- 2.2 Incentivize employers to allow work-based language learning or schedule flexibility to attend language classes
- 2.3 Create a language + employment track, where participants take language lessons in tandem with job matching support

3. FACILITATE RECOGNITION OF STUDIES AND SKILLS

Actions:

- 3.1 Provide individualized counseling sessions** on diploma recognition, equivalence procedures, and alternative pathways (especially for professions with strict licensing)
- 3.2 Assist with document translation and submission** to education authorities or professional bodies
- 3.3 Organize peer support groups** (e.g., migrant professionals mentoring each other through equivalence and job search processes)

4. INCREASE PROTECTION AGAINST DISCRIMINATION AND EXPLOITATION

Actions:

4.1 Train employers and HR staff from local companies (especially SMEs)

- ✓ Non-discrimination in the workplace
- ✓ Culturally sensitive communication
- ✓ Supporting diverse teams

4.2 Create an anti-discrimination resource team with NGOs and legal aid groups to support workers experiencing bias from employers or colleagues

4.3 Publicize a list of “inclusive employers” - businesses committed to fair and diverse hiring practices

5. PROMOTE VISIBILITY AND TRUST IN SUPPORT SERVICES

Actions:

5.1 Develop an annual “Know Your Rights” communication campaign

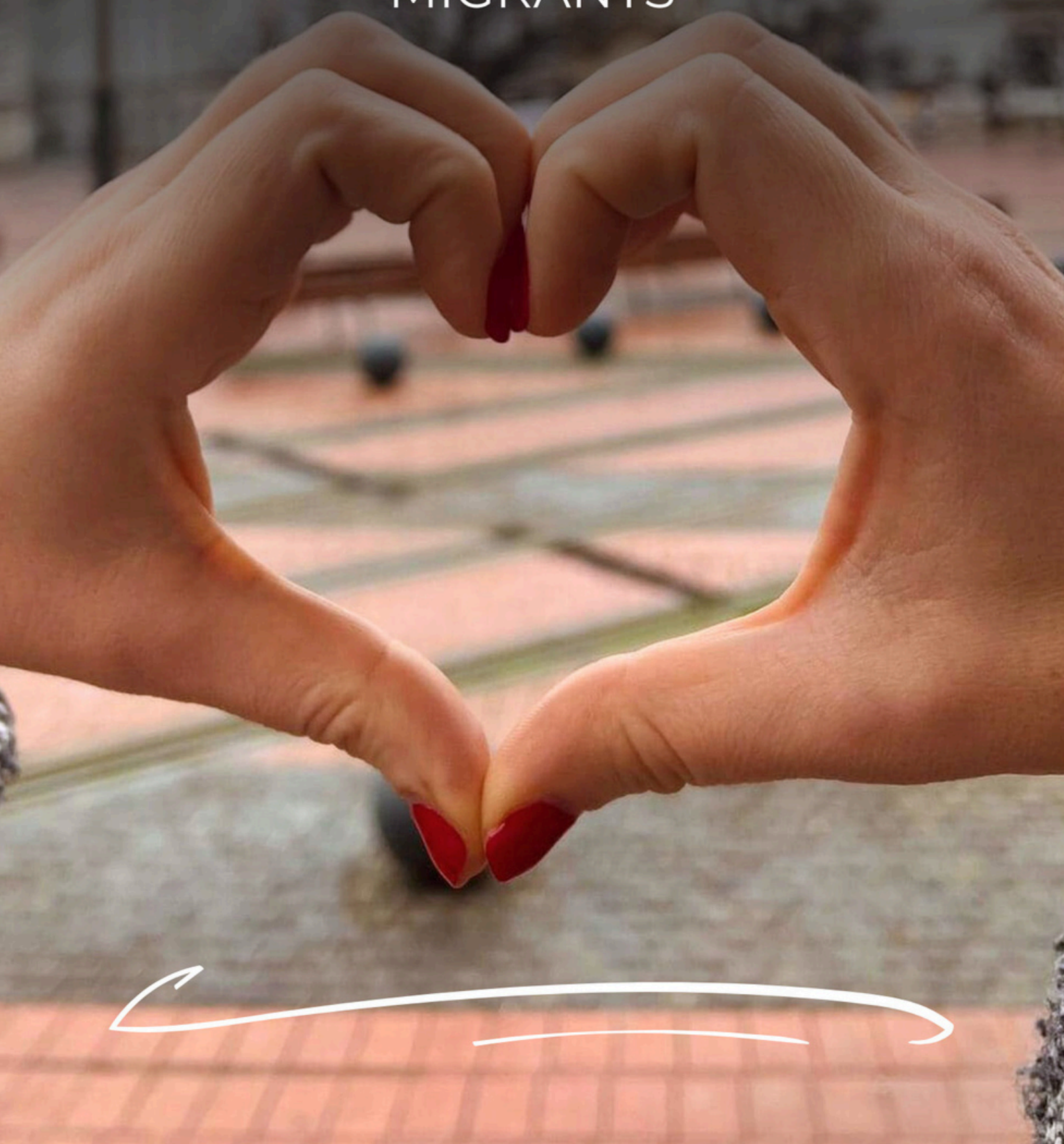
Where to go
for help

How to protect oneself
at work

How to validate
qualifications

5.2 Train trusted messengers (interpreters, peer mediators, community leaders) to spread information offline and online

REDUCTION OF BARRIERS IN
ACCESS TO **HEALTH** FOR MORE
INFORMED REFUGEES AND
MIGRANTS



By 2028, improve access to healthcare for at least 80% refugees and migrants living in Timișoara, by:

- ✓ Strengthening coordination in the local health system
- ✓ Improving communication, procedures, and IT systems
- ✓ Supporting medical personnel and interpreters
- ✓ Facilitating family doctor registration and continuity of care

1. IMPROVE SYSTEM COORDINATION & COMMUNICATION

Actions:

1.1 Organize **quarterly coordination meetings** between the **Health Insurance House, family doctors, hospitals, municipality** and **NGOs** to clarify procedures, resolve blockages, and align practices.

1.2 Create a **local protocol** outlining roles, registration steps, and referral pathways - with a shared info sheet circulated to all providers.

2. INVESTING IN HEALTH PERSONNEL TRAINING

Actions:

2.1 Provide at least **2 practical training sessions** for doctors, nurses, and admin staff:

- ✓ Migrant/refugee entitlements
- ✓ Handling language barriers
- ✓ Using the insurance system effectively

3. FACILITATE LANGUAGE ACCESS

Actions:

- 3.1 Establish a **volunteer medical interpreter database** (covering Ukrainian, Russian, Arabic, etc.)
- 3.2 Create a **simple interpreter request form/system** accessible to clinics and hospitals

4. ADVOCACY FOR IT AND SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

Actions:

- 4.1 Advocate with the **National Health Insurance House** to address:

Electronic coding
system issues

Real-time status
checks

Communication tools
for claims





IMPROVE ACCESS AND ENROLLMENT IN FORMAL EDUCATION



General objective:

Guarantee equitable access to quality, inclusive, and trauma-informed education for all refugee and migrant children in Timișoara by strengthening enrollment pathways, improving institutional coordination, and fostering trust and inclusion within school communities.

1. INCREASE NUMBER OF REFUGEE AND MIGRANT CHILDREN ENROLLED IN FORMAL EDUCATION IN TIMISOARA

Actions:

1.1 Work with schools and NGOs to **identify** refugee children currently **out of formal education**.

1.2 Support families with enrollment paperwork, translations, and interpretation. **1.3** Advocate with the Ministry of Education/County School Inspectorate for:

- ✓ Simplified processes for audience students to become full students
- ✓ A transitional “bridging” program or preparatory class

1.4 Provide **child psychologists** and **language mediators** at key schools

2. STRENGTHEN INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY AND POLICY CONSISTENCY BY IMPROVING THE CAPACITY OF LOCAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS (SCHOOLS, SCHOOL INSPECTORATES, SOCIAL SERVICES) TO CONSISTENTLY APPLY REFUGEE-INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PROCEDURES

- ✓ Delivering practical training to staff
- ✓ Developing local-level procedures aligned with national law
- ✓ Facilitating coordination between key actors

Actions:

2.1. Conduct **3 training sessions** for school principals, social workers, and administrative staff

2.2 Develop a **“local education response guide”** (with examples and templates)

2.3 Convene a **working group** of 5–8 institutions to align practices and create referral pathways

3. FOSTER INCLUSION AND BUILD TRUST IN SCHOOL COMMUNITIES BY IMPROVING SOCIAL INCLUSION AND TRUST BETWEEN REFUGEE/MIGRANT FAMILIES AND HOST COMMUNITIES IN **AT LEAST 3 SCHOOL COMMUNITIES** IN TIMIȘOARA

- ✓ Supporting psychosocial activities for children
- ✓ Running intercultural awareness sessions
- ✓ Training school staff to handle bias and cultural tension


Actions:

3.1 Implement **weekly social-emotional learning activities** and creative workshops (drama, art, sports) in selected schools

3.2 Train teachers and staff:

- ✓ Intercultural communication
- ✓ De-escalation of bias/conflict in class
- ✓ Recognizing trauma symptoms

3.3 Host **community events** with parents and students (shared meals, exhibitions, welcome days)



ENSURING **HOUSING ACCESS**

General objective:

Ensure that refugees and migrants in Timișoara have equitable access to safe, affordable, and dignified housing through coordinated local mechanisms that promote availability, legal protection, and targeted support for the most vulnerable.

1. EXPAND ACCESS TO SAFE AND AFFORDABLE RENTAL HOUSING

By 2028, facilitate access to **safe, affordable housing** for **at least 100 refugees and migrants** in Timișoara by:

- ✓ Creating alternative housing pathways (e.g. dormitories, converted buildings)
- ✓ Engaging landlords and real estate agents
- ✓ Launching an inclusive rental listing system
- ✓ Partnering with employers and authorities to co-develop solutions

Actions:

1.1 **Launch a local rental platform** with a section for foreign tenants and landlords who accept migrants.

1.2 **Train at least 10 real estate agents and landlords** on legal rights, anti-discrimination, and working with newcomers.

1.3 Identify **50+** housing units

✓ Vacant school dormitories

✓ Converted public buildings

✓ Employer partnerships

1.4 **Support employers** to provide compliant, minimum-standard accommodation for migrant workers.

2. PROTECT MIGRANTS FROM HOUSING DISCRIMINATION AND EXPLOITATION

By 2028, increase housing security and rights protection for **at least 100 refugees and migrants** by:



Verifying rental contracts

Creating a structure to report abuses

Raising awareness of migrant housing rights in the broader community

Actions:

2.1 **Establish a housing verification and referral practice** (in municipality social assistance service and partner NGOs):

- ✓ Reviews rental contracts for fairness and legality
- ✓ Tracks cases of discrimination or abuse

2.2 **Run 3 public awareness events** in intercultural neighborhoods to promote inclusion and respect for migrants' housing rights.

2.3 **Train municipal social workers and housing officials** on migrant-specific risks and referral systems.

3. PROVIDE EMERGENCY AND SUPPORTED HOUSING FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS

By 2028, create **emergency and transitional housing solutions** for at least **50 vulnerable migrants/refugees** (e.g., families, women, unaccompanied minors) through:

- ✓ Multi-stakeholder collaboration
- ✓ Temporary use of public/private spaces
- ✓ Targeted social support programs

Actions:

3.1 **Create a local emergency housing action plan** with contingency protocols for crises (e.g., conflict surges, evictions).

3.2 **Rehabilitate at least one unused building** into a collective housing project (e.g., temporary shelter or shared social housing).

3.3 **Establish a housing fund** supported by local authorities, employers, and NGOs to subsidize rent for vulnerable groups.

3.4 **Coordinate with schools and employment offices** to match housing offers with beneficiaries' daily needs and mobility.



WELCOMING CITY

General objective:

1. IMPROVE ACCESS TO PRACTICAL, MULTILINGUAL INFORMATION

By 2028, ensure that **at least 80% of migrants and refugees in Timișoara** have **access to accurate, multilingual, and up-to-date information** on public services, rights, and local opportunities through coordinated digital and physical platforms.

Actions:

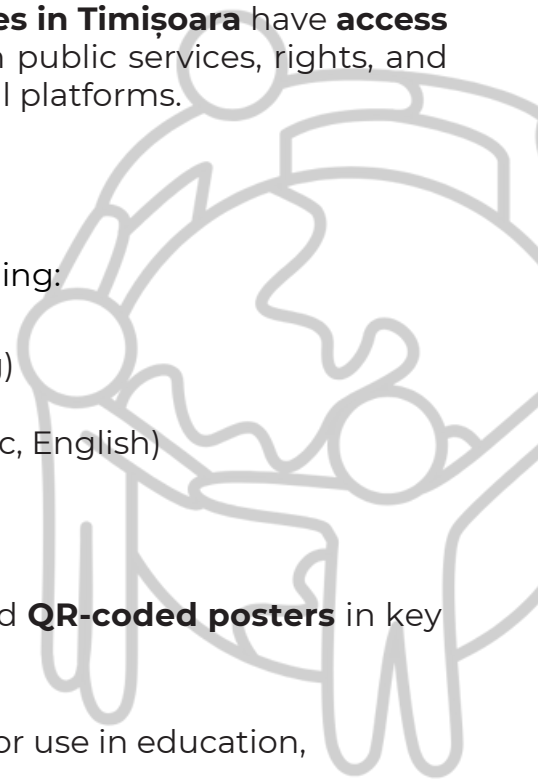
1.1 Launch a multilingual integration website or app, including:

- ✓ Service map (health, education, jobs, legal help, housing)
- ✓ Translated forms and FAQs (Romanian, Ukrainian, Arabic, English)
- ✓ Events calendar, community groups, citizenship guides

1.2 Create and distribute a printed “Welcome Guide” and **QR-coded posters** in key places (bus stations, clinics, schools, city hall)

1.3 Establish a city-level translator/interpreter database for use in education, medical, and administrative settings

1.4 Designate and train intercultural mediators or liaisons to work inside city institutions (e.g., social services, hospitals, police stations)





2. STRENGTHEN COORDINATION OF WELCOMING SERVICES

By 2026, establish a **permanent “Welcome Coordination Team”** composed of local institutions, NGOs, migrant liaisons, and volunteers to oversee the delivery of **at least 4 key services** (orientation, referrals, citizenship support, and case management) through a **One-Stop Welcome Hub** or equivalent structure.

Actions:

2.1 Develop and pilot a One-Stop-Shop (physical or mobile) for:

- ✓ Legal aid, housing advice, school enrollment, job help
- ✓ With trained intercultural staff and language support

2.2 Form a working group of 10+ stakeholders (public authorities, NGOs, migrant leaders, employers)

2.3 Run quarterly coordination and feedback meetings with migrant/refugee groups and service providers

2.4 Create protocols for referring newcomers between services with consent, follow-up, and case tracking

3. BUILD SOCIAL BONDS THROUGH REGULAR INTERCULTURAL EVENTS

By 2028, increase local participation in **social cohesion activities** by organizing **at least 12 intercultural events** (4/year) that promote **shared experiences, service exchange, language practice, and community building**.

Actions:

3.1 Organize cultural meetups, skill-sharing events, or food fairs co-led by locals and migrants

3.2 Launch a “service exchange network”, where people can offer and receive help (e.g., childcare, translation, haircuts, cooking)

3.3 Support targeted peer groups, such as:

✓ Support group for single mothers

✓ Refugee youth circles

✓ Integration group for older adults

3.4 Host evening and weekend activities to improve attendance for working migrants and local residents





FIGHTING **DISINFORMATION** ABOUT MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

General objective:

Promote a well-informed, inclusive, and resilient local community by ensuring access to accurate information about migrants and refugees, amplifying real-life stories, and strengthening public capacity to recognize and reject disinformation.

1. IMPROVE ACCESS TO PRACTICAL, MULTILINGUAL INFORMATION

By 2028, ensure that **at least 70% of public-facing communications about migrants/refugees in Timișoara** are accurate, evidence-based, and distributed through official or community-trusted sources, by:

- ✓ Developing a fact-checking and rapid response team
- ✓ Launching visible information campaigns
- ✓ Engaging institutions in public communication

Actions:

1.1 Set up a local “Info Response Team” made up of communication officers, journalists, and NGO reps to:

- ✓ Monitor local media and social media for disinformation
- ✓ Issue corrections or rebuttals with institutional backing
- ✓ Submit rights of reply to media channels

1.2 Launch a public-facing website or section of the municipality site for:

Myth-busting articles	Verified statistics	Stories of local migrant contributions
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1.3 Use official social media channels (city hall, NGOs, schools) to push verified, simple messages weekly

2. PROMOTE POSITIVE, HUMANIZING NARRATIVES ABOUT MIGRANTS

By 2028, increase visibility of **at least 50 real-life stories** of migrants and refugees in local media, online platforms, and public events, with the goal of improving public perception and promoting integration.

Actions:

2.1 Launch a storytelling campaign called “Real People, Real Stories”:

- ✓ Share short videos, articles, and interviews on social media and local press
- ✓ Highlight contributions, challenges, and shared values

2.2 Use creative platforms (TikTok, Instagram) to reach youth with messages from migrants themselves

2.3 Organize public exhibitions, posters, or mural projects in visible places (bus stations, schools, libraries)

2.4 Develop a city-wide “Migrant Voices Week” with events in neighborhoods, schools, and parks

2.5 Create story-based lesson materials for use in schools and community centers

3. STRENGTHEN LOCAL MEDIA LITERACY AND PUBLIC RESILIENCE

By 2028, provide **media literacy and anti-disinformation training to at least 300 residents** (including youth, seniors, teachers, and community leaders) to increase critical thinking and reduce the spread of false narratives.

Actions:

3.1 Deliver workshops in schools, libraries, and NGOs on:

- ✓ How to detect fake news
- ✓ What ~~looks~~ reliable
- ✓ How to verify social media claims

3.2 Partner with influencers or media educators to run short-form, engaging online video series

3.3 Create a local guide: “How to Talk About Migration Responsibly”



PROMOTING **STAKEHOLDERS
AND MIGRANTS/REFUGEES
CO-CREATION SOLUTIONS
AND INVOLVEMENT**

General Objectives:

Foster a cohesive and welcoming community in Timișoara by expanding inclusive spaces, volunteer engagement, migrant-led participation, and accessible language learning - enabling mutual understanding, shared belonging, and active citizenship.

1. EXPAND LOCAL VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT IN INTEGRATION SUPPORT

By 2028, engage at least 100 local residents (including migrants and host community members) as trained volunteers, mentors, or facilitators in supporting refugee/migrant integration through language classes, civic guidance, and social inclusion.

Actions:

1.1 Launch a city-level volunteer training program (weekend/evening format) with NGOs:

- ✓ Romanian language support
- ✓ Rights navigation (e.g., healthcare, documents)
- ✓ Anti-discrimination and trauma awareness

1.2 Create a “**Newcomer Support Buddy System**” that matches refugees with volunteers based on interests, language, or location

1.3 Recognize volunteers through a “**Welcoming City Certificate**” or small grant incentives

1.4 Partner with universities, youth organizations, and faith groups to mobilize student and community volunteers

2. CREATE INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY SPACES AND PROGRAMS FOR BELONGING

By 2028, establish at least 3 integration-focused community hubs or meeting centers in different neighborhoods, hosting monthly intercultural or social events, to foster mutual understanding and friendship.

Actions:

2.1 Renovate or repurpose public spaces (unused buildings, libraries, schools) into **Integration Hubs**

2.2 Run **monthly “Meet the Community” events:**

- ✓ Cooking traditions
- ✓ Language cafés
- ✓ Family play groups
- ✓ Shared storytelling nights

2.3 Include **“Welcome Corners”** inside public institutions (City Hall, hospitals, etc.) for info and orientation

2.4 Encourage **cultural operators** to co-produce performances, exhibits, or workshops on migration narratives

3. INCREASE MIGRANT-LED INITIATIVES AND REPRESENTATION

By 2028, support the development of **at least 10 migrant/refugee-led initiatives**, including peer support groups, advocacy circles, or entrepreneurial projects, and ensure their **representation in local coordination structures**.

Actions:

- 3.1 Provide micro-grants and mentorship to migrant-led projects (e.g., youth clubs, women’s groups, cooking collectives)
- 3.2 Facilitate the formation of a **“New Residents of Timișoara Council”** or similar platform to engage with municipal structures
- 3.3 Include migrant representatives in advisory boards:

Employment	Education	Culture
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3.4 Launch **campaigns that feature migrant community leaders as mediators and ambassadors** of inclusion

4. STRENGTHEN LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH COMMUNITY AND INCENTIVES

By 2028, increase Romanian language learning opportunities by offering **at least 10 community-run language initiatives** (volunteer-led or institution-backed), including formats that combine learning with **practical support or social engagement**.

Actions:

4.1 Support volunteers to offer weekend and evening language classes with material or financial aid for attendees

4.2 Host “Language +” sessions, combining Romanian practice with:

✓ Job search workshops

✓ Cultural orientation

✓ Social support for mothers, elders, or youth

4.3 Offer **rewards or stipends** (e.g., grocery vouchers, transit cards) for consistent participation



5. RISK ASSESSMENT

The implementation of Timișoara's Integrated Action Plan requires careful monitoring of risks that may affect the feasibility, timeline, and effectiveness of the proposed measures. The risk assessment identifies potential challenges across institutional, operational, social, and financial dimensions, providing mitigation strategies to support sustainability.

Institutional Risks

1. Fragmented coordination across stakeholders

The diverse range of actors involved (municipality, NGOs, schools, employers, healthcare providers, IGI) may lead to inconsistencies or delays.

Mitigation: Establish a permanent coordination mechanism embedded in the municipality's Resilience and Community Mobilisation Service.

2. High dependency on project-based funding

Many integration activities rely on short-term financial resources.

Mitigation: Integrate actions into municipal budgets and seek multi-year funding via AMIF, EU programmes, and local partnerships.

Operational Risks

3. Capacity limitations in service provision

Social workers, educators, healthcare staff and mediators may face increasing workloads.

Mitigation: Develop capacity-building programmes and promote cross-sector training.

4. Limited availability of affordable housing

Demand may exceed available resources, affecting the success of housing-related actions.

Mitigation: Strengthen partnerships with housing associations, private landlords, and develop municipal support schemes.

Social and Community Risks

5. Risk of discrimination or misinformation

Negative narratives may undermine integration efforts.

Mitigation: Implement communication campaigns and community-building activities countering stereotypes.

6. Uneven engagement of migrant communities

Some groups may be less represented in decision-making processes.

Mitigation: Use targeted outreach, community ambassadors, and multilingual communication.

External Risks

7. Policy changes at national level

Unexpected shifts in immigration or social policy may affect implementation.

Mitigation: Maintain active dialogue with national-level stakeholders and adapt measures accordingly.

Overall, the risk assessment highlights the need for coordination, resource stability, strengthened capacities, and continuous engagement with communities.



6. IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) ensure that the IAP produces measurable improvements in work integration, access to healthcare, education, housing, and community belonging. Timișoara will use a mixed approach combining quantitative indicators, qualitative insights, and continuous feedback from stakeholders.

1. Expected Short-Term Impacts (2025–2026)

- Improved coordination between municipal services and NGOs.
- Increased awareness among migrants regarding labour rights and available services.
- Operationalisation of new tools: reporting mechanism for workplace abuse, interpreter database, multilingual information materials.
- Higher participation in Romanian language courses and legal counselling sessions.

2. Expected Medium-Term Impacts (2027–2028)

- At least 300 migrants supported in employment pathways.
- At least 80% of migrants with improved access to healthcare.
- New partnerships with employers supporting inclusive recruitment.
- Enhanced protection mechanisms against discrimination and exploitation.
- Stronger school inclusion practices through training and parent engagement.

3. Expected Long-Term Impacts (2029+)

- A more cohesive urban community with stronger links between newcomers and long-term residents.
- Lower vulnerability for migrant households through improved access to jobs, housing, and education.
- Increased institutional capacity for coordinated migrant integration in Timișoara.
- Sustainable inclusion practices embedded in municipal policies.

4. Evaluation Framework

Evaluation will be based on:

- Annual progress reports prepared by the municipality and ULG members.
- Quantitative indicators (e.g., number of trained professionals, course completions, counselling sessions, reporting cases, interpreter requests).
- Qualitative evaluation through interviews, focus groups, and satisfaction surveys.
- Mid-term evaluation (2027) and a final evaluation (2029) with external experts if possible.

7. GOVERNANCE AND PARTNERSHIPS

The implementation of the Integrated Action Plan is based on an open, participatory, and collaborative governance model, ensuring shared ownership and long-term impact. The Plan is conceived as a public good, developed collectively within the URBACT Local Group (ULG), and remains in the public domain. As such, it can be freely used, adapted, and referenced by all interested stakeholders committed to promoting refugees and migrant integration at local and regional level.

Multi-stakeholder governance

The URBACT Local Group brings together a wide range of actors, including public authorities (County Council of Timiș, municipal departments, DAS Timișoara, hospitals and the County Health Insurance House, County School Inspectorate), international organizations (UNHCR), civil society organizations (LOGS, AID Rom, Institutul Intercultural Timișoara), academic institutions (Universitatea de Vest Timișoara), migrant-led associations (Asociația Faina UA), volunteers, and representatives of migrant and refugee communities. This diversity ensures a holistic, rights-based, and needs-driven approach to integration.

Shared ownership and open use

The Local Integrated Plan is not owned by a single institution but by the partnership as a whole and by the local community. Its measures, methodologies, and priorities are openly accessible and can be used by:

Local and regional authorities to inform policies and services

NGOs and community organizations to design and implement integration actions

Members of the URBACT Local Group to develop project proposals, access national or European funding (e.g. AMIF, ESF+, Erasmus+, Interreg), and scale up pilot initiatives

Academic and research actors for analysis, evaluation, and knowledge transfer

This open-access approach encourages innovation, avoids duplication of efforts, and strengthens coherence among initiatives implemented in the city.

8. COMMUNICATION & ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Maintaining transparency, participation, and community engagement is essential for the successful implementation of Timișoara's Integrated Action Plan (IAP). Effective communication ensures that migrants, local residents, institutions, and partners understand the objectives, contribute to solutions, and remain actively involved throughout the process.

Timișoara's communication and engagement strategy builds on three core principles:

1. Accessibility

All information related to the IAP will be made public through clear, multilingual, and accessible channels. Updates will be shared regularly through:

- Municipality of Timișoara official platforms:

City website, Department of Social Assistance website, dedicated IAP page, public service newsletters.

- Local Media & Community Networks:

Radio Timișoara, West City Radio, local press, community notice boards, student networks.

- Social Media Channels:

Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp groups, and community associations' channels—especially relevant for target groups such as Nepali, Sri Lankan, Syrian, Ukrainian, and African communities.

- Schools, health units, and NGOs:

As key frontline services supporting migrant families.

2. Participation

Migrants and community members will be involved in all stages of the engagement process through:

- Storytelling formats featuring migrants' personal journeys, successes, and challenges.
- Workshops in schools, neighbourhood events, sports and cultural activities.
- Peer mediators and intercultural facilitators who support dialogue, accurate information sharing, and conflict mediation.
- Feedback sessions (surveys, focus groups, open meetings) integrated in each phase of IAP implementation.

3. Recognition and Inspiration

The strategy will highlight successful stories and frontline actors who contribute to meaningful integration. Schools, NGOs, employers, healthcare units, and volunteers who actively support inclusion will be acknowledged through:

- Annual recognition events
- Media stories
- Public showcases
- Social media campaigns

Timișoara will also share experience throughout the URBACT network, contributing to international knowledge exchange and reinforcing the city's role as a regional hub for integration and inclusion.



9. OUTLOOK AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Timișoara's IAP is part of a broader and long-term transformation strategy that positions the city as a welcoming, resilient and future-ready urban community. The plan reflects a vision in which migration is understood not as a temporary challenge but as an opportunity to strengthen the social fabric, workforce, and cultural vibrancy of the city.

As implementation begins, several actions are expected to generate lasting institutional and social change. Some activities will become embedded into the routines of local services—such as coordinated healthcare access, employment pathways, and training for intercultural mediators. Others, such as partnerships with employers, educational institutions, and community hubs, will pilot new approaches that can later be scaled.

The municipality will evaluate early successes and integrate them into permanent programmes where feasible. This includes strengthening school inclusion practices, improving labour market integration, enhancing language learning pathways, and promoting anti-discrimination measures across institutions.

Furthermore, Timișoara will continue to cultivate partnerships at European level. Its participation in URBACT networks, thematic exchanges, and pilot initiatives will allow the city to adapt best practices—especially those developed for medium-sized European cities facing demographic change, workforce shortages, and increasing diversity.

Migration flows and community needs will continue to evolve. For this reason, the IAP promotes flexibility, continuous learning, and co-creation. New data gathered through local monitoring systems and through the Local Action Group will help refine interventions and identify gaps, amplifying community voices and supporting sustainable municipal adaptation.

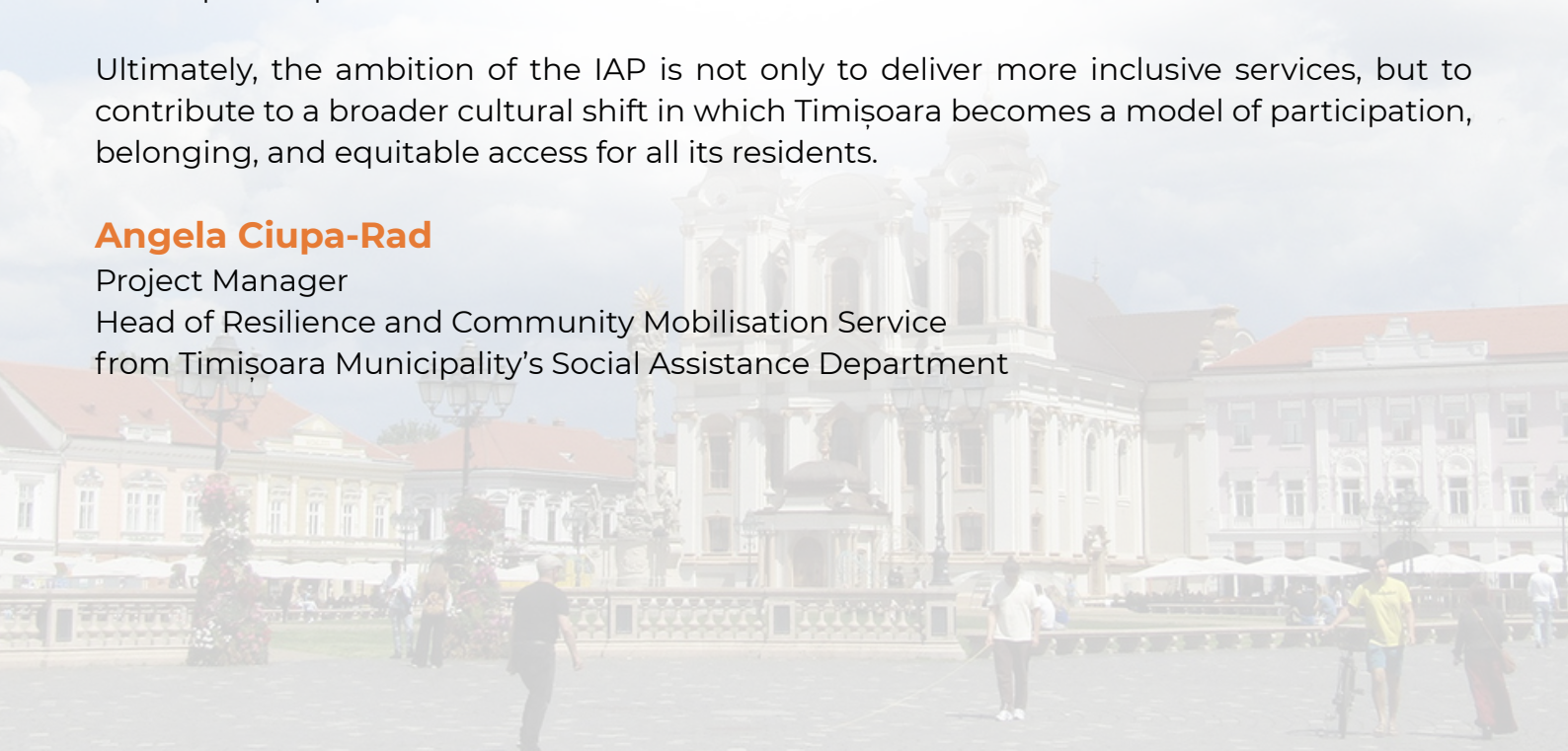
Ultimately, the ambition of the IAP is not only to deliver more inclusive services, but to contribute to a broader cultural shift in which Timișoara becomes a model of participation, belonging, and equitable access for all its residents.

Angela Ciupa-Rad

Project Manager

Head of Resilience and Community Mobilisation Service

from Timișoara Municipality's Social Assistance Department



10. BIBLIOGRAPHY & WEB REFERENCES

This Integrated Action Plan has drawn upon a wide range of local, national and European resources, including strategic documents, good practices, policy reports and project platforms.

The following references have informed the diagnosis, design and implementation logic of the Timisoara IAP:

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GOOD PRACTICES AND PROJECT INSPIRATIONS